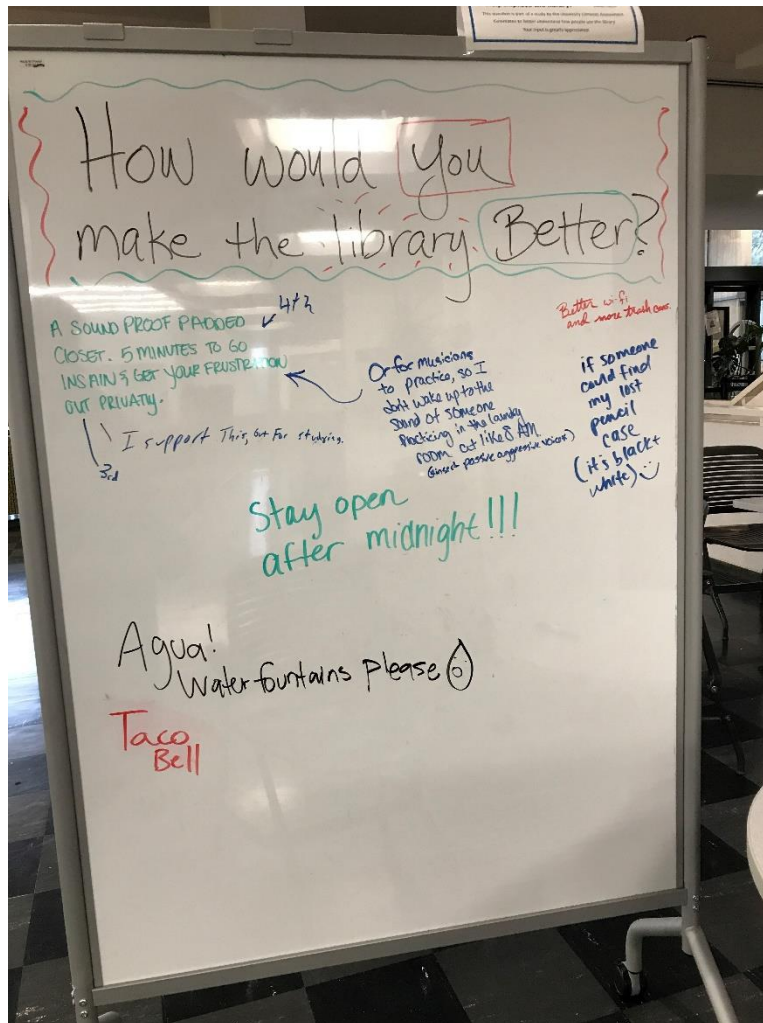# University Libraries
Assessment Committee Report
2016-2017

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Introduction

In recent years, the University Libraries Assessment Committee has explored, among other topics, user satisfaction at service points (2013/14) and preferred forms of communication from the Libraries to students (2014/15). Most recently, the committee administered the LibQual® survey instrument (2015/16). Because of consistent commentary found in LibQual® comment sections about space, and because of changing student needs, this year, the committee explored how library patrons use the spaces, furniture, and facilities within Michener Library.

The committee determined that a mixed methods approach would best answer the central question of why library users choose particular spaces for particular activities. Three methods were implemented in March and April 2017; they are described briefly here, with more detail provided in the following sections.

- Flip charts and white boards with questions written on them were placed in key locations throughout the library, so patrons could respond anonymously.
- Early in the survey timeframe, brief (1-2 minute) semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data on the use of space and the rationale for choosing that space.
- Slightly longer (3-5 minute) semi-structured interviews were conducted during the latter portion of the survey period by committee members who asked patrons to engage in a "short conversation" about their reason for being in the library and why they chose their particular location.

No personally identifying information was collected; however, informed consent forms were distributed to all participants in the interviews. In analyzing the results, one response could comment on multiple areas, so the compound comments were split into individual components for analysis.

The following sections of this report outline the specific methods used, questions asked, data collected, and analysis of the results. The data generated will help determine priorities for library spaces, and the committee also offers its own thoughts and recommendations for moving forward.

Overall, members of the committee communicated with more than 325 participants, with the research generating hundreds of specific comments for analysis. As an incentive Libraries pencils or highlighters were distributed, along with five bags of sweet treats, 10 boxes of fruit snacks, and mini flying discs. Respondents were happy to let the committee members know their thoughts on Michener Library, including what they love about it, what can be done better, and how the use of this building serves their academic and social needs.
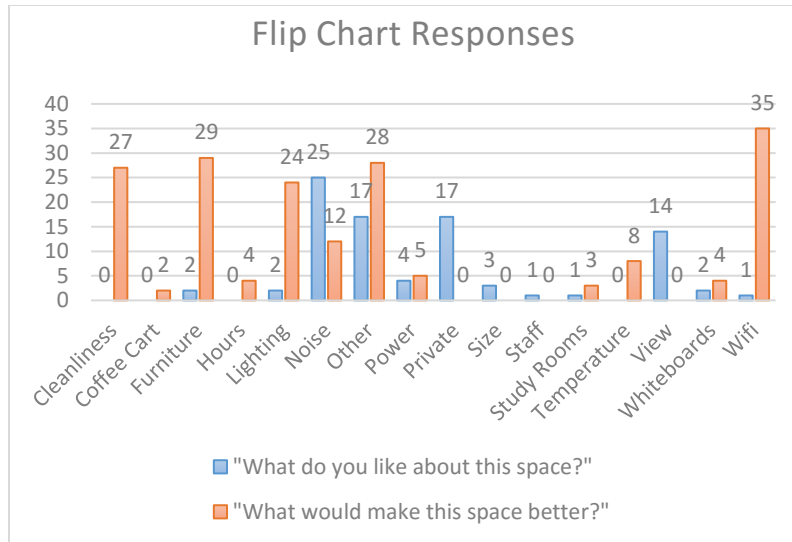
Flip Chart Analysis

Methods

Large form "sticky note" paper, flip chart paper, and 11 x 17 sheets of paper, were placed in various locations around the 2nd and 3rd floors of Michener Library in order to gather comments about the spaces. Two questions were asked: "What do you like about this space?" and "What would make this space better?" The locations around the building included alcoves, nooks, study rooms, and open areas near the center of the building. For two weeks in late March and early April, patrons were allowed to add comments, and a student from the Dean's office went around each day to remove sheets of paper that were filled and replace them with empty sheets. At the end of the two weeks, the same student collated the comments into an Excel spreadsheet. Comments that included profanity were removed. All others were included. The comments were separated by "what do you like" and "make this space better" and then categorized into 15 categories. The complete list of comments is available in Appendix A.

Results

A total of 270 comments were generated, with 181 falling into the "make this space better" category and 89 in the "what do you like category." Patrons like the quietness[1] of much of the space in Michener Library (28% of responses) and the privacy offered by the space (19%). Many of the responses also commented on how much they like the view offered by various spaces in the building (16%). One patron commented that they like being "next to the window because it gives me a mental break." Patrons also commented on the furniture ("I like the tables with the dividers!") and the furniture in the new study rooms ("I like the seating. It makes the room comfortable."). There was even a "shout-out" to the staff ("The Staff is great").

More than two-thirds of the comments focused on how Michener Library could be made better. Patrons would like better wifi (19%), more options for furniture (16%), a cleaner building (15%; 70% of the comments on cleanliness focused on the windows), and better lighting, especially in the nooks (13%). There were also a number of comments about the building being too noisy (7%), with half of those comments being from patrons on the 2nd floor. Patrons also expressed their concerns about the temperature of the building (4%), most commenting the building is too cold.

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[1] Categorized as noise in the charts; may indicate the area is too loud, too quiet, or just the right level of sound

Flip Chart Responses

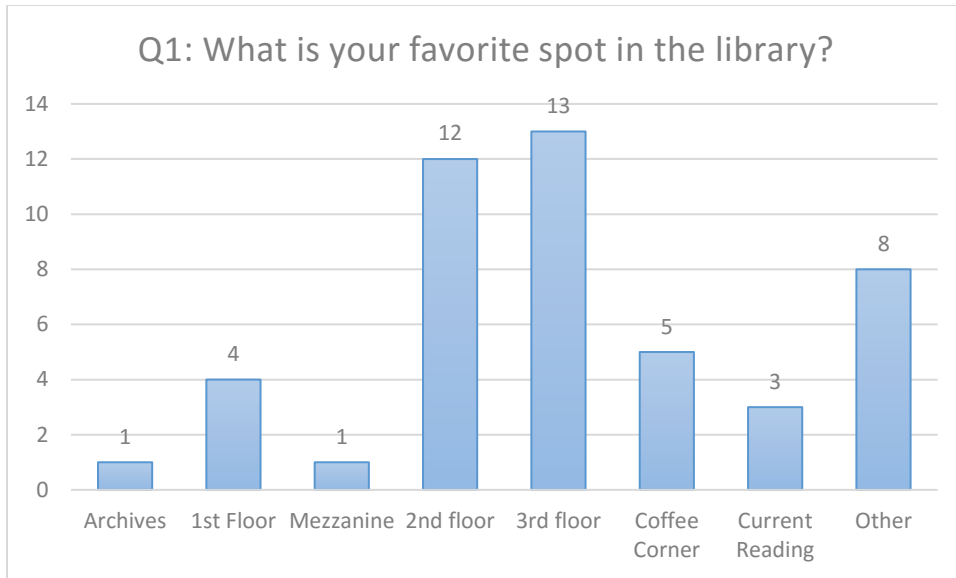| Category	"What do you like about this space?"	"What would make this space better?"
Cleanliness	0	27
Coffee Cart	0	2
Furniture	2	29
Hours	0	4
Lighting	2	24
Noise	25	12
Other	17	28
Power	4	5
Private	17	0
Size	3	0
Staff	1	0
Study Rooms	1	3
Temperature	0	8
View	14	0
Whiteboards	2	4
Wifi	1	35

Whiteboards

Methods

A whiteboard was placed on the west side of the stairs in Michener Library near the coffee cart seating, and library visitors were asked to respond to a variety of questions over a period of 6 weeks. The anonymous responses could be written or drawn. In some cases, the responses were in the form of tally marks. The following is a list of the questions used in the procedure.

1. What is your favorite spot in the library?
2. Why did you visit the library today?
3. What is the library's best kept secret?
4. Which library resources have you used?
5. What chairs do you like? What tables do you like? What furniture do you like? (This question involved using photos of current chairs and tables and photos of furniture for possible future purchase)
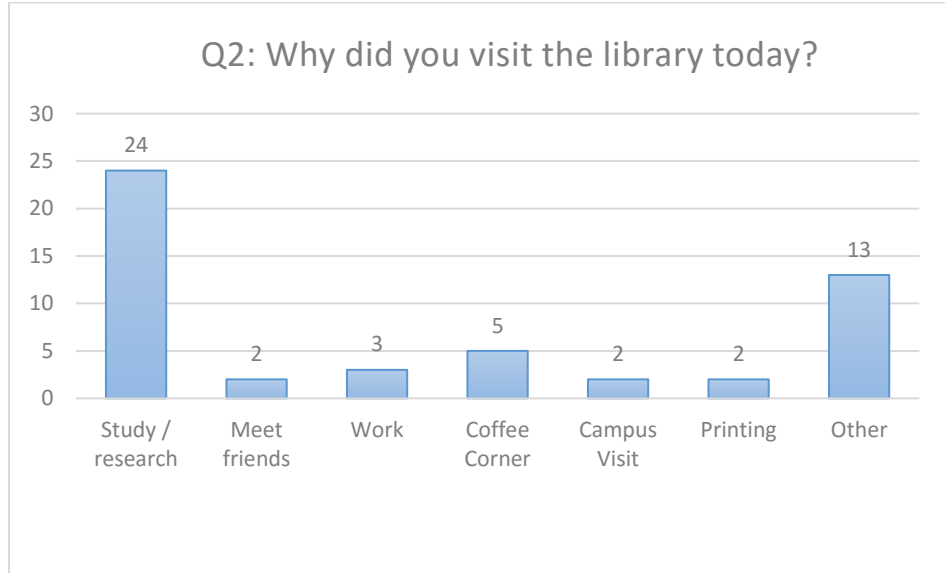6. What would make the library better?

Results

Question #1 ("What is your favorite spot in the library?) generated 47 comments over the course of the first week. Some comments were very specific. For example, one comment written was "1st floor at the long tables." Others were very general, as in, "Everywhere." These comments were assigned to categories for analysis as shown below. The complete list of comments are available in Appendix B .

Q1: What is your favorite spot in the library?

Archives	1st Floor	Mezzanine	2nd floor	3rd floor	Coffee Corner	Current Reading	Other
1	4	1	12	13	5	3	8

Nearly 28% of the responses indicated the 3rd floor is their favorite spot to be in Michener, with 26% indicating 2nd floor is their favorite spot. Surprisingly, considering the level of activity on the 1st floor, only 9% indicated the 1st floor as their favorite spot.

While Question #1 gave the committee data referring to "where," Question #2 addressed the issue of "why." Question 2 generated 51 comments, which were also categorized.

Q2: Why did you visit the library today?

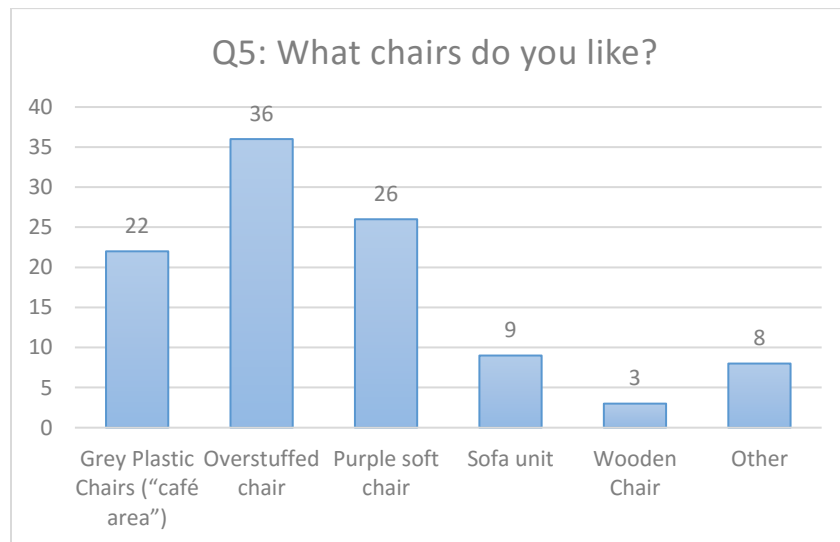| Study / research	Meet friends	Work	Coffee Corner	Campus Visit	Printing	Other
24	2	3	5	2	2	13

It is not surprising to see that 47% of the comments indicated the reason for visiting Michener Library was to study or do homework. Some comments were very specific (e.g., "Research for a novel I intend to write"), while other comments were very general (e.g. "study"). Some comments were difficult to categorize because they did not fit into one of the assigned categories (e.g. "We are old and graduated in 05/06, fun visit! – I used to work here.")
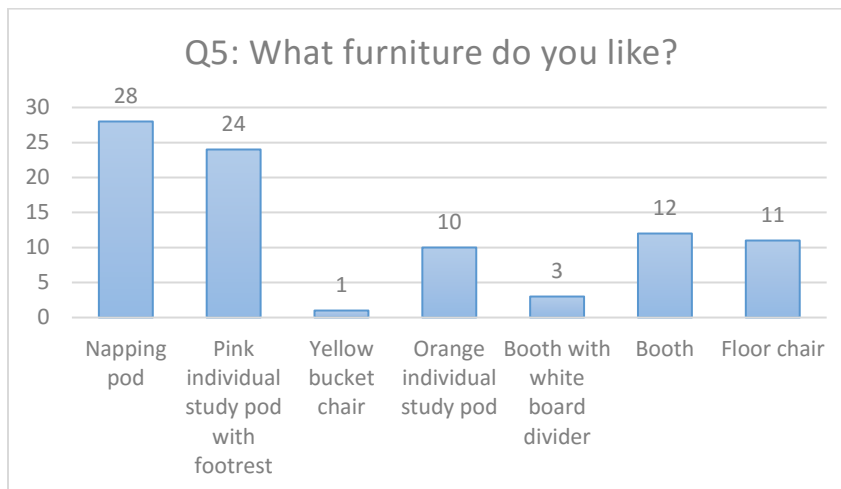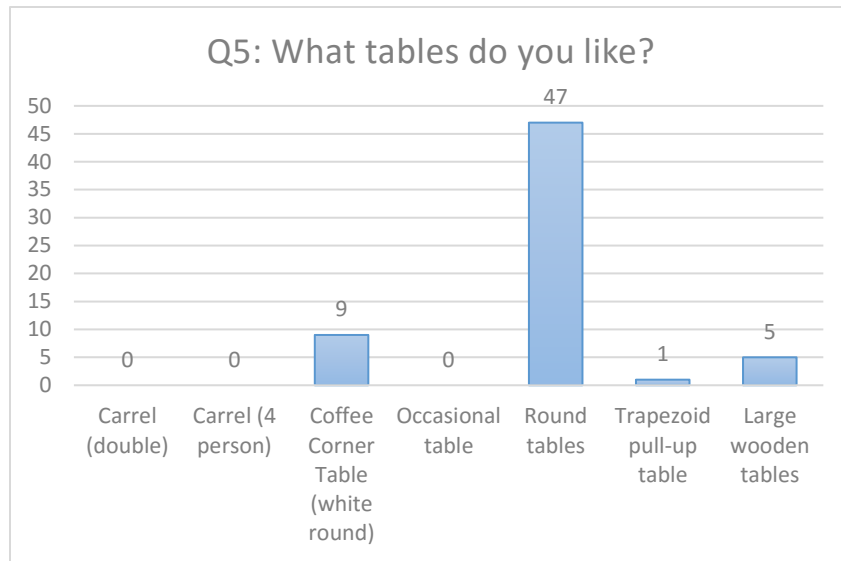
Question #3 ("What is the library's best kept secret?") did not generate any meaningful responses. The whiteboard was monitored for two days with no worthwhile responses. The committee believes more useful comments might have been generated with a differently worded question. However, the decision was made to remove the question and begin gathering data for question #4.

Question #4 ("What resources have you used?") involved placing photos of several of our resources on the whiteboard. The responses to this question were in the form of tally marks.
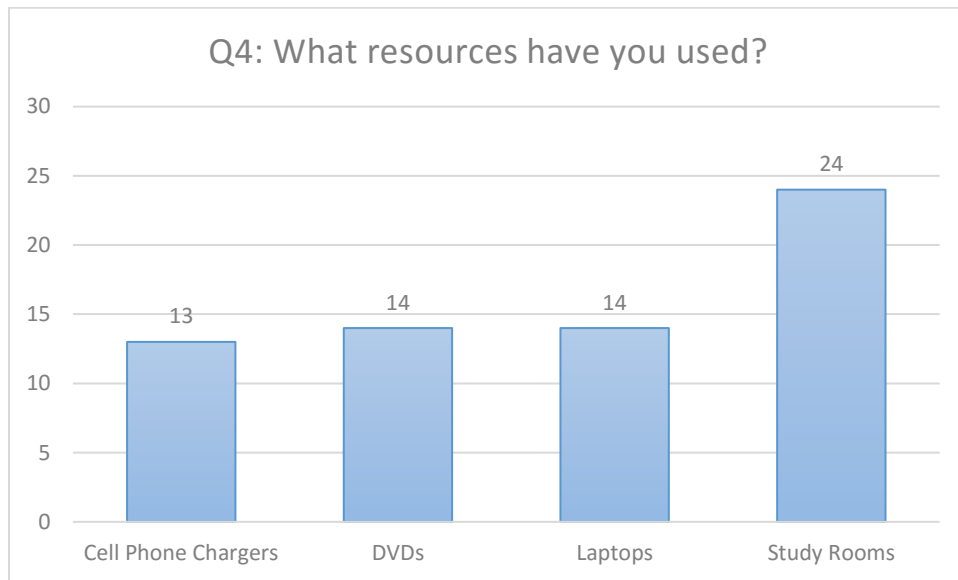

Question #5 ("What furniture do you prefer/like?") also used photos to provide examples of the types of chairs and tables visitors might prefer. The photos referring to the chairs and tables were of existing furnishings. The assortment of photos referring to the question, "What furniture do you like?" showed furniture that is not currently in Michener but could be purchased in the future. These responses were also in the form of tally marks.

Q5: What tables do you like?

Category	Value
Carrel (double)	0
Carrel (4 person)	0
Coffee Corner Table (white round)	9
Occasional table	0
Round tables	47
Trapezoid pull-up table	1
Large wooden tables	5

Q5: What furniture do you like?

Category	Value
Napping pod	28
Pink individual study pod with footrest	24
Yellow bucket chair	1
Orange individual study pod	10
Booth with white board divider	3
Booth	12
Floor chair	11

60% of the responses indicated that users prefer seating that is upholstered. Overwhelmingly, the table of choice is the round tables that are located throughout the building. As it relates to possible future purchases, the respondents prefer napping pods and individual study pods.

Question #6 ("What would make the library better?") generated 70 comments over the course of one week. These comments were also divided into categories for easier analysis. Visitor suggestions included additional library hours (11%), better Wi-Fi (13%), and more restrooms on the 1st floor (7%), as well as the suggestion to provide a public drinking fountain on the 1st floor (3%). Providing a microwave for student use was also mentioned more than once.

Q6: What would make the library better?
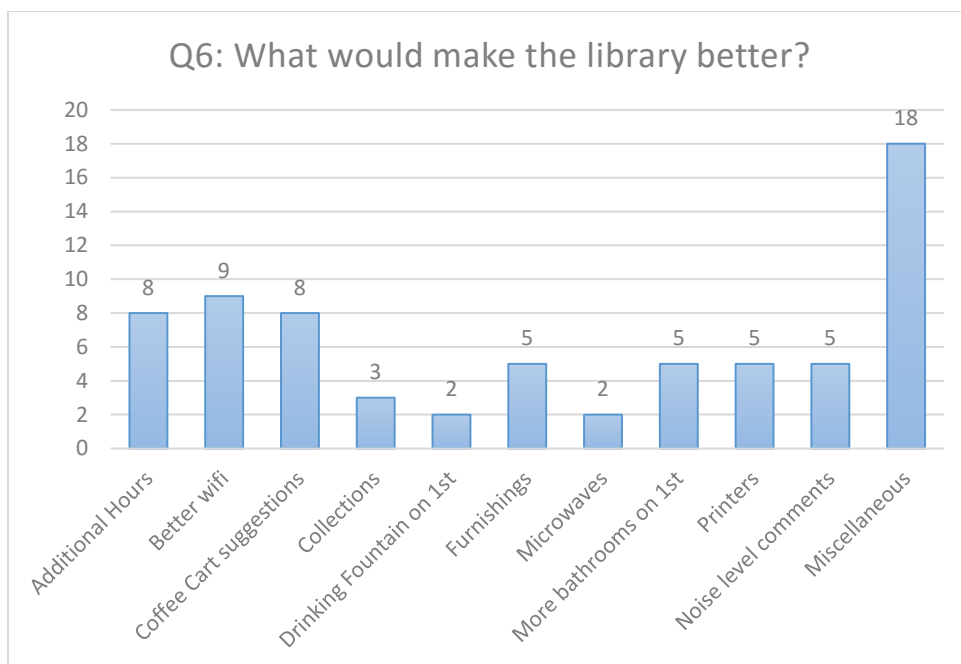
Several comments referred to furnishings and noise level. The majority of those responses seemed to imply the need for more comfortable furniture with one suggestion to "add curtains to the new study rooms on the 2nd floor." The suggestions regarding noise levels ranged from providing "sound proof" rooms to "enforcing" the quiet zone on the 3rd floor. Another broad category of suggestions referred to Coffee Cart improvements. While the library does not oversee the Coffee Cart, the committee will pass on these suggestions to Dining Services.

Roving

Methods

The Assessment Committee collected data by conducting semi-structured interviews with library users in the building. Committee members were assigned specific areas of the building to walk through, asking all patrons in the area if there were willing to participate in a short survey. The interviews were conducted in mid-April 2017. As an incentive, respondents were offered a choice of Libraries marketing items such as highlighters, as well as candy and fruit snacks.

If the person indicated they were willing to participate, the interview questions covered the purpose of the respondent's library visit; why they chose the spot they were working at; if they had used the space before; if the spot they chose is their favorite spot; if not, what is their favorite spot; and what would make Michener Library better. The complete list of comments can be found in Appendix C.

Results

A total of 84 interviews were conducted with 17% of people asked declining to participate. The majority of the participants (52%) were located on the 1st floor, with 28% sitting on the 2nd floor,

and 6% sitting on the 3rd floor. The participants interviewed also sat in varied areas: 39% sitting in an open space, 26% using a computer, 23% sitting in an alcove, and 12% sitting in a nook.

Most of the participants interviewed were in the library to either study, do homework, or write a paper. The space is also used as a place to "kill time" between classes. Interestingly, many of the students who indicated "Other" for what they were doing in the building included activities traditionally defined as studying or homework (e.g. "three lesson plans due tomorrow," or "research").
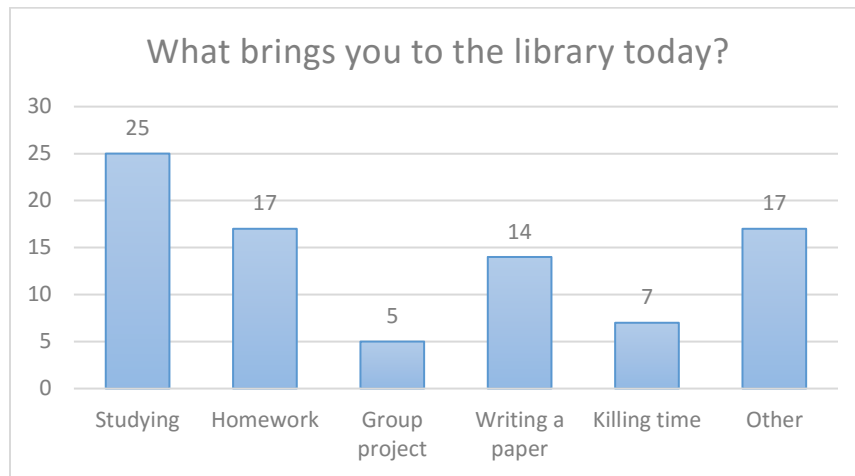

There were a variety of reasons for people sitting where they were, with most people favoring the facilities (20%; e.g. outlets, windows, etc.), the private/social aspect of the area (21%), and the noise level (17%).
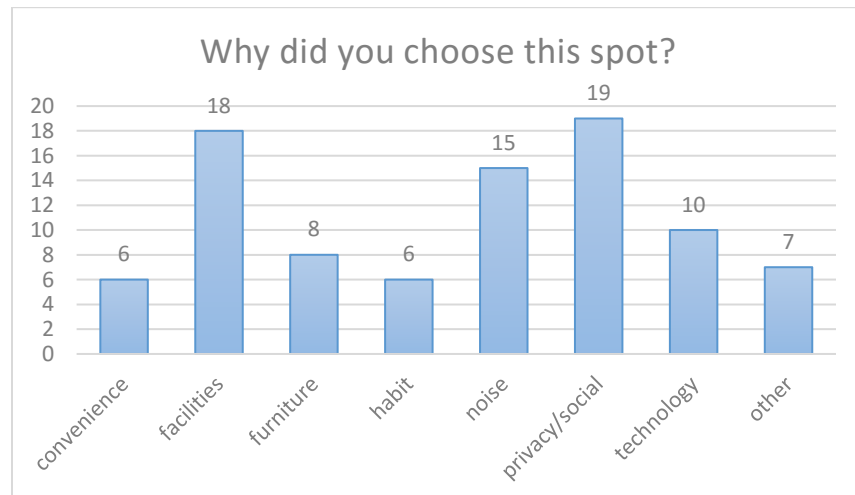
The majority of the respondents had used the space previously (81%), and for almost half of the respondents (49%), this was their favorite spot in the building. For those for whom the spot where they were interviewed was not their favorite spot, many of them indicated they preferred an area that was quieter, but it also depended on what they were working on (e.g. "Independent work or reading [means] I'm on 3rd because it's quieter").

In general, students are very satisfied with the building (26%). There were concerns with the location of outlets (16%) and with the wifi (14%). Students whose concerns were categorized as "Other" ranged from wanting free snacks and beer to having more skeletons available for checkout.
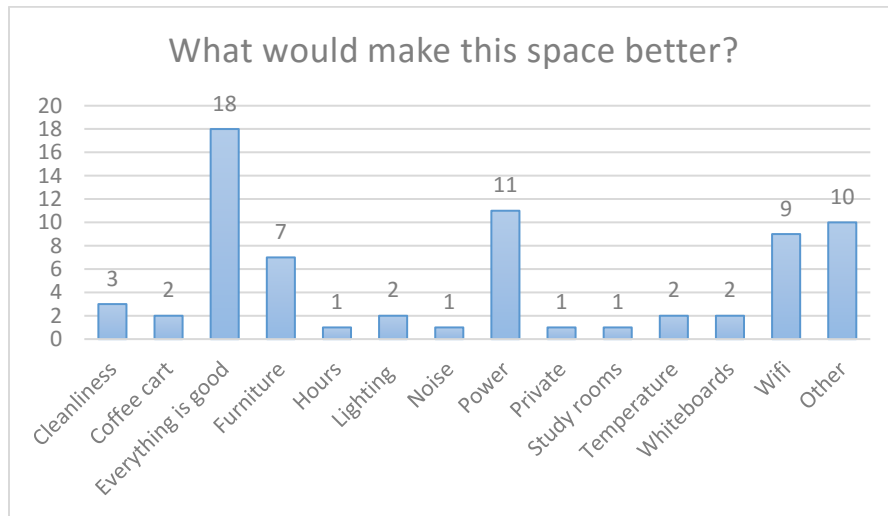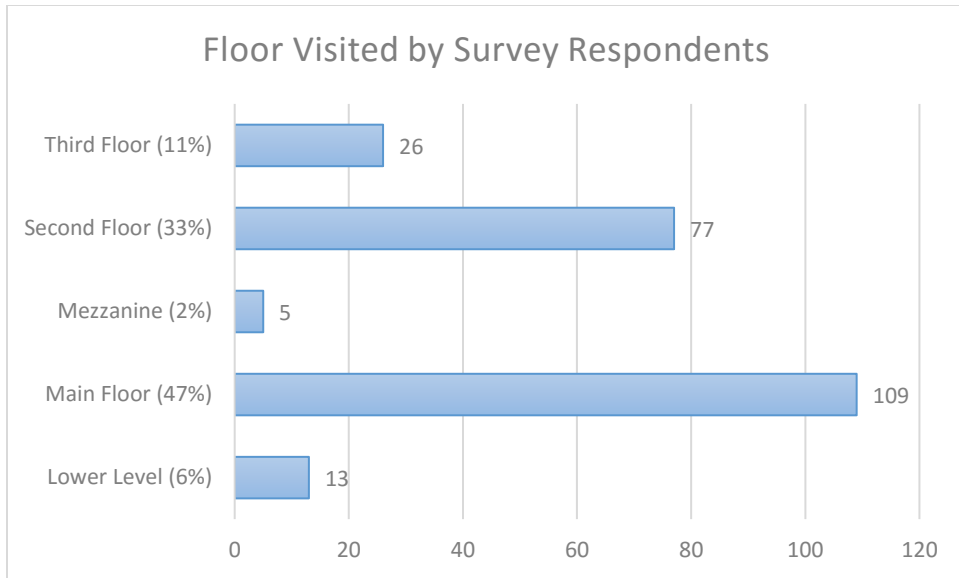

Tabling

Methods

The Assessment Committee collected data by conducting semi-structured interviews with library users either entering or leaving the library. Committee members staffed a table near the Michener Library entrance for 2-hour blocks in the morning, afternoon, and early evening, for 14 hours of interviews, between March 27 and April 6, 2017. They greeted visitors as they entered or left the library and invited them to participate in a brief interview. As an incentive, respondents were offered a choice of Libraries marketing items such as highlighters, as well as candy and fruit snacks.
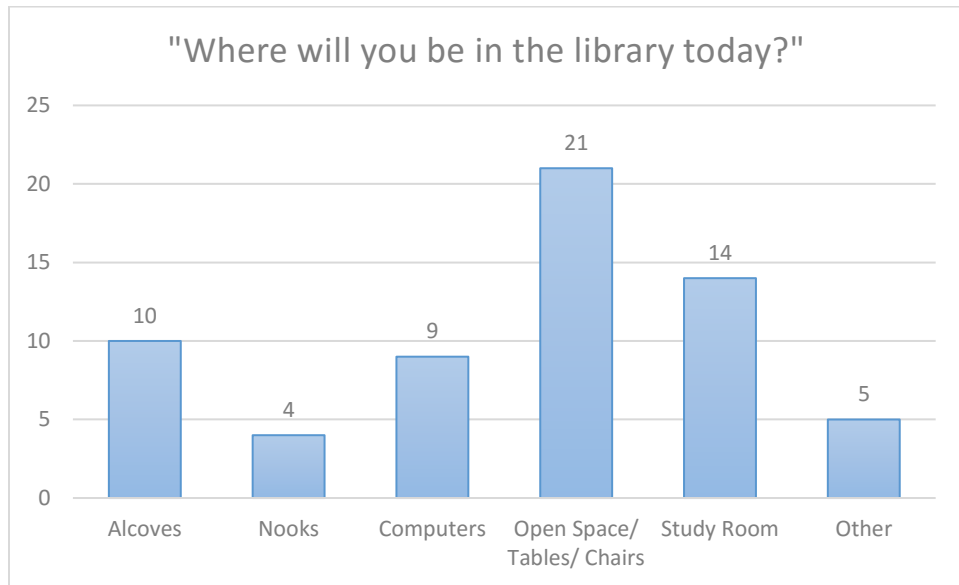
The interview questions covered the purpose of the respondent's library visit; where they had spent time or intended to spend time; why they liked that location; and whether that was their favorite spot in the building. The complete list of comments can be found in Appendix D.
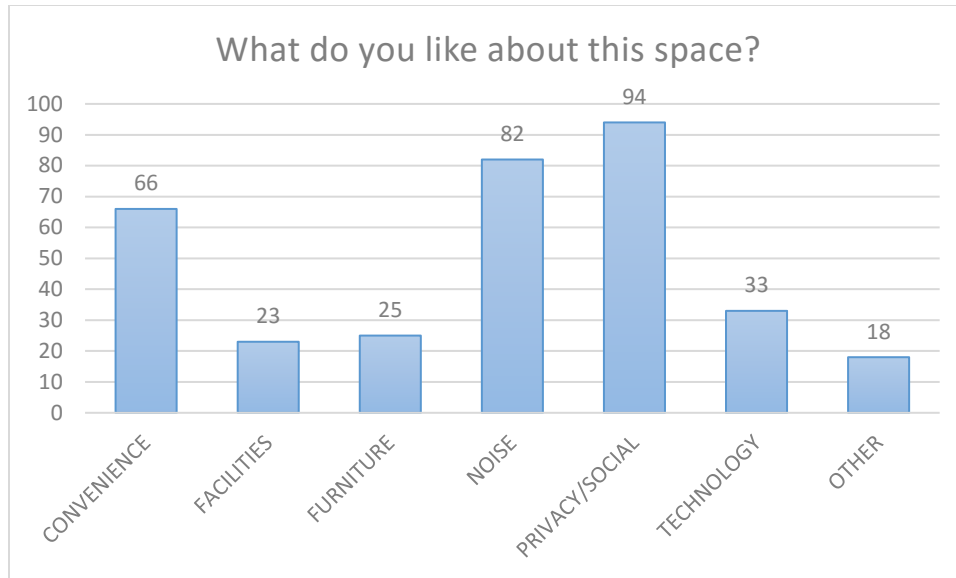
Results

A total of 230 interviews were conducted, with a majority of respondents (80%) indicating they were spending time on the 1st or 2nd floor of Michener Library.

Floor Visited by Survey Respondents

Third Floor (11%): 26
Second Floor (33%): 77
Mezzanine (2%): 5
Main Floor (47%): 109
Lower Level (6%): 13

Some respondents also indicated which area of a given floor they used.

"Where will you be in the library today?"

Alcoves: 10
Nooks: 4
Computers: 9
Open Space/ Tables/ Chairs: 21
Study Room: 14
Other: 5

What the respondents liked about the building fell into the broad categories of Convenience, Facilities, Furniture, Noise Level, Privacy/Social Spectrum, and Technology. Many comments prioritized the level of noise in a given space (both louder and quieter), as well as the proximity or distance from other library users.

What do you like about this space?

Category	Value
CONVENIENCE	66
FACILITIES	23
FURNITURE	25
NOISE	82
PRIVACY/SOCIAL	94
TECHNOLOGY	33
OTHER	18

Of the 230 respondents, 46% said the place they visited on that day was not their favorite. They then followed up with information about their favorite spots, and more of those spots were on upper levels in more private settings such as nooks or alcoves (e.g. "[I] prefer 3rd floor because it's a quiet zone"). Another 14% of respondents said their favorite spot in the library depends on what they are doing during a given visit. Typical comments were, "If I need a quiet space I go to the third floor" and "Circle couch for comfy group meetings and the tech rooms for group study".

Themes

The Assessment Committee observed a number of themes in analyzing the data gathered. First and foremost, patrons use Michener Library in a variety of ways, depending on their needs. They come here to study individually; they come to collaborate with others; they come to use the technology available in the building; and the come here to socialize. Those varied needs effect both the area they use in the building and the type of furniture they use. While the furniture currently available in the building suits their needs, the respondents reacted favorably to the prospect of adding new furniture, such as napping pods or individual/two-person study pods. It is also important to continue purchasing a variety of types of tables and chairs, since different activities need different types of furniture.

It came as a surprise to no one on the committee that the most populated floor in the building is the 1st floor. What was surprising, however, was that for many of those people it was not their favorite place in the building. 1st floor is popular for a number of reasons: access to computers and printing, proximity to the coffee cart, easy visibility if meeting a group, etc. However, many respondents like the quietness of the 3rd floor, especially when they need to focus. While many people like the 3rd floor study rooms, there were some responses that indicated the study rooms are too isolated, so they preferred to use the open tables at the center of the floor or go to the Government Publications area on the lower level. It is important for Libraries personnel to

remember that low-use spaces might be valued by patrons, and that should be taken into account when thinking about re-purposing space.

There were many comments on the overall cleanliness of the building, including the dirtiness of the windows and tables. Respondents also indicated some concern about the lack of privacy provided by the new study rooms. Wifi access in the building was also raised as a concern for many respondents.

Finally, it should be noted that while there are recommendations for ways to improve Michener Library, many people are very happy with the space and services provided. When asked, many people had no additional comments for how to make the building better or responded with "It's all good."

Recommendations

The Assessment Committee makes the following recommendations to Libraries Administration:

- The dirtiness of the building was mentioned by many survey respondents, and this is a theme the Assessment Committee also saw in last year's LibQual results. The committee urges Libraries Administration to continue to work with Facilities about the lack of cleanliness in Michener Library.
- Purchase new furniture for the building with a focus on individual study spaces. The individual or two-person study pods were very popular in the whiteboard activity.
- Work with CSSM staff to create furniture arrangements that insure adequate spaces for individual study that allow for spreading materials out.
- Investigate better lighting options for the nooks.
- Work with IM&T to determine if the recent wifi upgrade is providing adequate access.
- Investigate whether more power stations are needed.
- Survey student opinion about the new study rooms, especially related to perceived privacy.